

GEOGRAPHY OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

REE 345 (meets with GRG 327)

Spring 2013

Instructor: Dr. Bella Bychkova Jordan
e-mail: belka@mail.utexas.edu

Office hours: Tue, Thu 2:00-3:00
Office: Calhoun 3

Course description: This course is designed to give a deeper understanding of the Post-Soviet space, focusing on the major geographic factors that define this enormous Eurasian realm, including modern and historical cultural landscapes, economy and politics of the region, demography and health, religious cultures, environmental crises, contested territories, and the most recent geopolitical developments in the region.

Basis for the grade:

- 1) students must take 2 exams, each worth 25% of the totals grade. Students will write a term paper, worth 30% of the final grade. The paper must be 10-12 pages long, double-spaced, typed in 12-point font. The bibliography should contain scholarly publications, including books and articles from peer-reviewed journals.
- 2) Students will prepare an oral presentation on a topic related to the term paper and approved by the instructor. The presentation's length should not exceed 15 minutes.

Course policies:

- 1) Make-up exams will be allowed only in cases of medical emergency, with the written proof from the doctor's office. There will be no final exam.
- 2) late term papers will not be accepted. All the term papers must be submitted on May 3.
- 3) Observation of religious holidays: according to the University of Texas at Austin regulations religious holidays are observed accordingly. The students need to notify the instructor in advance.
- 4) Plagiarism will not be tolerated and students might face severe consequences in cases of plagiarism. Students must use their own ideas and words only and cite their sources very carefully.
- 5) Cell phones must be put away during class time and computers may be used only for note taking or class activities.
- 6) Though there are no points assigned for class attendance, attending lectures is strongly recommended as a prerequisite for success in this class.
- 7) The University of Texas at Austin will provide accommodations for students with disabilities.

Required textbook: A Geography of Russia and Its Neighbors. 2011. By Mikhail S. Blinnikov. New York: The Guilford Press. Available at UT Co-Op.

Course schedule

- | | |
|---------|---|
| Jan 15 | Introduction to the course |
| Jan 17 | Natural environment of the FSU (Textbook: 1-50) |
| Jan 22 | Environmental degradation and conservation (Textbook: 50-64) |
| Jan 24 | Ten Defining Features of Russia (lecture materials) |
| Jan 29 | Expansion of the Russian and Soviet empires (Textbook: 67-120) |
| Jan 31 | Asymmetrical Federation (lecture materials) |
| Feb 5 | Demographics and population distribution (Textbook: 137-166) |
| Feb 7 | Social Issues: wealth, health, poverty, and crime (Textbook: 167-182) |
| Feb 12 | Cultures and languages (Textbook: 183-198) |
| Feb 14 | Traditional Religious cultures (Textbook: 199-218) |
| Feb 19 | Economic geography (Textbook: 261-299; 317-336) |
| Feb 21 | Regional geography of Russia (Textbook: 369-382) |
| Feb 26 | The Ural region and beyond (Textbook: 383-407) |
| Feb 28 | Exam 1 |
| March 5 | Baltic States: the new NATO and EU members (Textbook: 408-414) |

- March 7 Ukraine, Belarus' and Moldova (Textbook: 415-423)
- March 11-16 **SPRING BREAK**
- March 19 The Caucasus: The Shatter Zone (Textbook: 369- 382)
- March 21 Baku and Yerevan: is the settlement possible? (handouts)
- March 26 Georgia: Where Europe vanishes (handouts)
- March 28 Oil and caviar: the future of the Caspian region (handouts)
- April 2 Central Asia: Introduction (Textbook: 424-433, handouts)
- April 4 Kazakhstan (Guest speaker from Kazakhstan)
- April 9 Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan (handouts)
- April 11 **Exam 2**
- April 16 Student presentations and discussion
- April 18 Student presentation and discussion
- April 23 Student presentation and discussion
- April 25 Student presentations and discussion
- April 30 Student presentations and discussion
- May 2 Student presentations and discussion/ Term papers due

Late term papers will not be accepted!

This syllabus is subject to change

